

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

I. Status of the Claims

Claims 8, 24-30 and 40 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter therein.

Claims 1, 9, 17, 33, 41, and 51-53 are amended without the introduction of new matter.

Claims 1-7, 9-23, 31-39, and 41-53 are pending.

II. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102/103

Claims 1-7, 9-14, 17-23, 25-30, 33-39, 41-47, and 49-51 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Bussick et al. (U.S. Patent No. 7,070,502, herein "Bussick"). Further, claims 8, 24 and 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Bussick in view of Walker et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,203,430, herein "Walker"). Claims 15, 16, 31, 32, 48, 52 and 53 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Bussick in view of Berman (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0045345). The rejections of claims 8, 24-30 and 40 are moot because the claims are canceled in the present response. Applicants respectfully traverse the above rejections of claims 1-7, 9-23, 31-39, and 41-53.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a game machine, and amended to incorporate features similar to those recited in previously presented claim 9 and to further clarify the features. Specifically, amended claim 1 recites, among others, that:

count display modules, each of which correspondingly
displaying said count for each of said reels, said count being measured

by said measuring module in association with each of said plurality of regions.

Referring to the non-limiting embodiment of the present invention shown in Fig. 3, each of the count display modules 106-110 correspondingly displays a count for each of the reels 101-105. The count is measured by the measuring module in association with each of the regions such as regions 112 and 113. Accordingly, a player can easily keep track of the count associated with each of the reels.

In the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner acknowledges that “Bussick does not disclose displaying a count wherein the count is how many times that the symbol was displayed on the reels.” Then, the Examiner combines Walker with Bussick to supplement the deficiency of Bussick.

However, Walker merely describes at column 3, lines 42-51 that “[t]he running count is adjusted accordingly, including increasing the running count to reflect occurrences of one of the tracked symbols and decreasing the running count to reflect expiration of occurrences of one of the tracked symbols.” In this regard, as shown in Fig. 3B of Walker, a tracked symbol meter 360 indicates the number of tracked symbols that have been accumulated by the player.¹ The tracked symbol meter 360 indicates the number of tracked symbols only by symbols such as “bells,” “oranges” and “bars,” and not by reels. Accordingly, Walker’s tracked symbol meter does not correspondingly display the number of tracked symbols for each of the reels. Thus, Walker fails to teach or suggest that each of the count display modules correspondingly displays the count for each of the reels, and that the count is measured by the measuring module in association with each of the regions, as recited in amended claim 1.

With respect to Berman, the Examiner cites Berman merely to supplement the deficiency of Bussick in that Bussick does not disclose the use of randomly generated special regions or randomly generated paylines.² Berman fails to teach or suggest that each of the count display modules correspondingly displays the count for each of the reels, and that the count is measured by the measuring module in association with each of the regions, as recited in amended claim 1.

Therefore, even if the teachings of the cited references of Bussick, Walker and Berman are combined, the combined teachings do not obviate the above-noted features of amended claim 1. Accordingly, amended claim 1 and claims dependent therefrom are patentably distinguishable over the cited references, either taken individually or in combination.

Amended claims 17 and 33 and claims dependent therefrom are distinguishable over the cited references, either taken individually or in combination, at least for the above reasons advanced for amended claim 1 to the extent that claims 17 and 33 are amended similarly to amended claim 1.

Claim 9 is directed to a game machine, and amended to clarify subject matter recited. Specifically, amended claim 9 now recites the features of a sub-symbol display module as follows:

a sub-symbol display module provided independently from
said reel display module, the sub-symbol display module displaying at
least one of a plurality of types of sub-symbols[.]

Referring to the non-limiting embodiment of the present invention shown in Fig. 3, main symbols are displayed on the reels 101-105. The count display modules 106-110, which serve as sub-symbol display modules, display multiple types of sub-symbols. As recited in amended claim 9, the sub-symbol display module is provided independently from the reel display module.

¹ See Walker at column 6, lines 34-37.

² See the outstanding Office Action at page 6, fifth and sixth lines from the bottom.

Accordingly, curiosity about the sub-symbol that will be displayed is provoked in a player. Also, the player can easily keep track of the sub-symbol displayed in the sub-symbol display module.³

The Examiner states that Bussick discloses “an alternate method wherein instead of replacing the symbols on the static display and changing display with wild symbols, the game machine will replace one or more symbols with one or more different symbols,” and that “[t]his replacement of symbols with subsymbols is done randomly in that the initial selection of symbols is a random selection of symbols to be displayed on the reels.”⁴

However, Bussick fails to disclose or suggest that a sub-symbol display module is provided independently from the reel display module, as recited in amended claim 9. Bussick’s invention merely replaces symbols displayed in the reels with different symbols, and is not provided with a sub-symbol display module that is independent from the reel display module. In this regard, the present invention recited in amended claim 9 does not replace the main symbols by the sub-symbols. In the present invention, the sub-symbol selection module randomly selects a sub-symbol to be displayed in the sub-symbol display module that is provided independently from the reel display module.

Therefore, the present invention recited in amended claim 9 is patentably distinguishable over Bussick. Also, each of Walker and Berman fails to teach or suggest at least the above-noted features of the sub-symbol display module recited in amended claim 9. Thus, even if the teachings of the cited references are combined, the combined teachings do not obviate the present invention recited in amended claim 9. Accordingly, amended claim 9 and claims dependent therefrom are patentably distinguishable over the cited references, either taken individually or in combination.

³ See the Specification at, for example, page 20, line 5 to page 21, line 12.

Amended claim 41 and claims dependent therefrom are distinguishable over the cited references, either taken individually or in combination, at least for the above reasons advanced for amended claim 9 to the extent that claim 41 is amended similarly to amended claim 9.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1-7, 9-23, 31-39, and 41-53.


CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below if the Examiner believes any issue can be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment.

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Respectfully submitted,

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⁴ See the outstanding Office Action at page 4, second paragraph.